

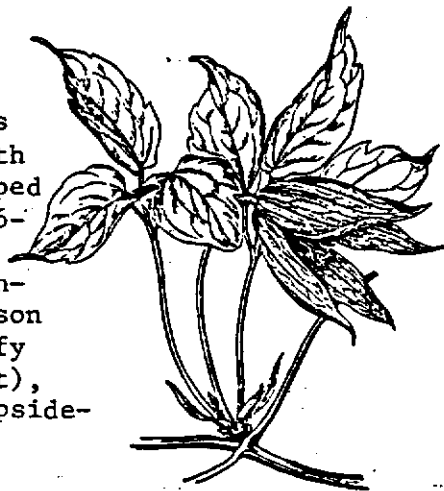
## MASSACHUSETTS RARE AND ENDANGERED PLANTS

### PURPLE CLEMATIS

(Clematis occidentalis Hornem.)

#### DESCRIPTION

Clematis occidentalis is a slender woody vine which climbs around supporting plants or rocks, and grows up to a length of 16" (5m.), but usually is much shorter. The heart-shaped leaves are opposite or in leaflets of three, measuring 1.6-3" (4-7.5cm.) long and 1-2" (2.5-5cm.) wide. The flowers are solitary on long stalks, having four bluish to pinkish-purple sepals 1.4" (3.5cm.) in length. The flowering season is mid-May to early June. The one-seeded fruit is a fluffy head of hairy brown achenes (small, dry, indehiscent fruit), each with a long feathery plume (the head resembling an upside-down mop).



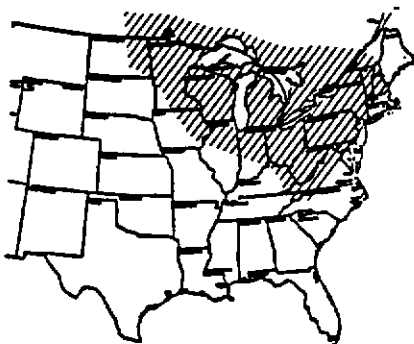
Gleason, H.A. The New Britton and Brown  
Illustrated Flora of the Northeastern U.S.  
and Adjacent Canada. New York Botanical Garden,  
1932.

#### HABITAT IN MASSACHUSETTS

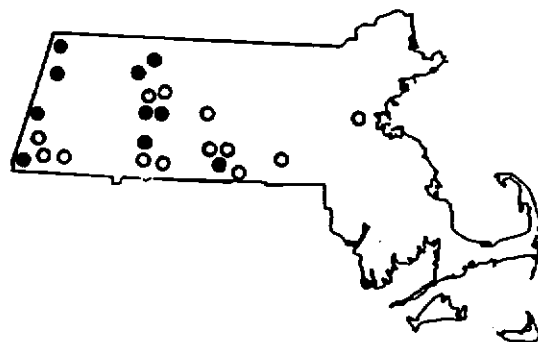
Purple Clematis is characteristically found in Massachusetts in Southern Calcareous Rocky Summit Communities: xeric (very dry and flat) ridgetops or summits where the soils are more or less calcareous and the flora is mainly southern. Bedrock outcrops are predominant features, resulting in openings in the tree canopy. It is also found occasionally in Southern Calcareous Cliff Communities: calcareous cliffs, ledges, and associated open talus areas with a flora that is mainly southern. In each of these community types, Purple Clematis is usually found on steep, semi-shaded rocky slopes, ravines, and cliffs, rarely in full sunlight. Species found in association with Purple Clematis include Carya (hickory), Betula (birch), Acer (maple), Solidago (golden-rod), and Cornus (dogwood).

#### RANGE

Purple Clematis is distributed from Quebec to Manitoba south to Connecticut and Michigan, and southward in the Appalachians to North Carolina.



Distribution of Purple Clematis



● Verified since 1978  
○ Reported prior to 1978

Distribution in Massachusetts by Town

(continued overleaf)

## PURPLE CLEMATIS (continued)

### POPULATION STATUS

Purple Clematis is presently considered a species of "Special Concern" in Massachusetts. Documented declines are probably due to its vulnerability to over-shading by maturing forests (vegetational succession) and increasing development. Currently (1978 to present), eleven occurrences have been cited in Massachusetts; historically, sixteen other occurrences have been found. Typically, most of the populations consist of a small number of plants, and are therefore easily overlooked.